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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/11/2026
TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: GENERAL (RET) BASER SELECTED AS TURKEY'S PKK
COORDINATOR

Classified By: Political-Military Counselor Carl Siebentritt,
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: General (ret) Edip Baser was appointed on September 8 as Turkey's Coordinator for Countering the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) terrorist organization. A respected, retired military officer who has good relations with both the government and the military and has fought the PKK in southeastern Turkey, he was chosen in response to our designation of Gen (ret) Ralston as the US Special Envoy. While his appointment has not been formally announced, Baser acknowledged his selection in a September 11 press interview.
END SUMMARY.

12. (C) MFA Deputy Undersecretary for Security Affairs Rafet Akgunay, the MFA's initial nominee for Turkey's PKK coordinator was replaced by GEN Baser following the US appointment of Gen Ralston. Baser is a respected retired general with international experience and a good relationship with the current Turkish government. We understand that Ralston and Baser met during Baser's tenure as Deputy Chief of the General Staff (DCHOD), when Gen Ralston was SACEUR.

13. (C) Baser retired from military service in 2002 as Commander of the Second Army, where he served for two years, following one year as Deputy Chief of the General Staff (DCHOD) and one year as Commander of the NATO headquarters in Izmir. Assumed by his American and Turkish peers to be destined to command the Turkish Land Forces and possibly become CHOD, Baser's move to the Second Army ended his upward career path. U.S. officials who know Baser characterize him as an intelligent, thoughtful and sophisticated officer who tried to capitalize on his experiences at the US Army War College, NATO Staff Headquarters and UK Army Staff College to expand Turkish military exchanges with foreign countries and to improve the organization and curriculum of the Turkish War College. He was rebuffed in these and other efforts by then-CHOD Kivrikoglu, a purported micro-manager who may have felt threatened by his subordinate's intellect and activism and sought to side-line his career.

14. (C) Baser has strong credentials for the Special Envoy position. As commander of the 14th Mechanized Brigade in Kars from 1988 to 1990, he experienced first-hand the difficult challenge posed by the PKK terrorist organization, losing his own troops to PKK attacks. He also has significant experience working with the civilian government and dealing with the Turkish General Staff (TGS) bureaucracy.

Through positions as Military Advisor to Prime Minister Tansu Ciller from 1993 to 1994 and Commander of the Third Corps in Istanbul from 1994 to 1998, Baser worked closely with civilian officials. During his four years in Istanbul, he developed a good relationship with then-Mayor of Istanbul Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the current Prime Minister. Through stints as a Staff Officer in the J-3 Strategic Planning Division and as DCHOD, Baser gained a familiarity with the inner workings of TGS.

5.(C) Despite the lack of an official announcement of his appointment, Baser has commented favorably on his selection to members of the press. In an interview with the daily BUGUN, Baser reportedly characterized the PKK topic as "a very critical and hot issue. It is so hot that it could burn not one's hands but also his arms and his face." Baser acknowledged the difficulty of the work in other press articles, but said he would "be willing to undertake the challenging job."

16. (C) Comment: Baser's broad military experience -- including countering PKK terrorism in the southeast -- his education and proven intellectual abilities, combined with his good relations with PM Erdogan, would appear to make him an excellent choice as Turkey's envoy for countering the PKK.
End Comment.

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